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First record of Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* for Tunisia

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Première observation du Chevalier à pattes jaunes *Tringa flavipes* en Tunisie. Le 18 mars 2014 un Chevalier à pattes jaunes *Tringa flavipes* a été observé près de Douz, Tunisie. Ceci constitue la première donnée pour le pays. Cette espèce nord-américaine a déjà été observée plusieurs fois au Maroc, mais il n'y a pas de mentions pour l'Algérie ni pour la Libye.

In March 2014 I led my first birding tour of Tunisia for Birdwatching Breaks. We began the morning of 18 March with a visit to some wetlands on the outskirts of Douz. Our first stop was at an area of reed-fringed shallow pools (at c.33°28'40.39"N 8°56'56.52"E) where a quick scan revealed the presence of waders such as Ruff *Calidris pugnax*, Wood *Tringa glareola* and Marsh Sandpipers *T. stagnatalis*, and Spotted Redshank *T. erythropus*. In the perfect light conditions, with early-morning sunshine behind us, I decided to check the area more thoroughly, and so we set up

our telescopes to check through the waders. After just a couple of minutes I came across a *Tringa* that was facing me on a raised clump of flattened reeds. It was clearly larger and taller than the nearby Wood Sandpipers. The breast was suffused brownish grey and the belly contrastingly white. The bill was intermediate in length between that of the nearby Wood and Marsh Sandpipers, and the legs appeared to be bright yellow. I quickly realised that I was watching a Lesser Yellowlegs *T. flavipes*, a species with which I am familiar from regular trips to North America and also having

seen several vagrants in the UK. Overall size, bill length and shape enabled me to eliminate Greater Yellowlegs *T. melanoleuca*. Although uncertain as to how rare this species was in Tunisia, I realised that it must be a significant find, so I proceeded to get the four group members and our local guide onto the bird. We watched it for *c.*10 minutes before the discovery of a Little Crake *Zapornia parva* distracted us, and when I later returned to search for the yellowlegs, I could not relocate it.

A poor digiscoped photograph was taken, but is unsuitable for publication here. The following brief description was taken. **Size** Larger than Wood and Marsh Sandpipers, but obviously smaller than a Spotted Redshank that was also present for comparison. **Head** A white supercilium was most obvious in front of and above the eye. Crown, nape and neck brownish grey. Throat white. **Upperparts** Mantle and scapulars rather uniform brownish grey. Wing-coverts and tertials also brownish grey, but edged with pale notches. In flight a white rump contrasting with a darker tail and dark back was visible. The white of the rump did not extend up the back (as it would in Greenshank, for example) and was similar to the pattern shown by Wood Sandpiper. **Underparts** Breast suffused brownish grey, contrasting with a clean white belly. **Bare parts** Bright yellow legs clearly longer than in Wood Sandpiper, but not as 'leggy' as nearby Marsh Sandpipers. The toes projected beyond the tail in flight. Bill dark, fine and of medium length, longer than in Wood Sandpiper, but not as long, nor as fine as in Marsh Sandpiper.

This appears to be the first record for Tunisia (Isenmann *et al.* 2005). Prior to 2003 there had been five records in Morocco (Thévenot *et al.* 2003), but there are no records from

neighbouring Algeria or Libya (Isenmann & Moali 2000, Atkinson & Caddick 2014). As a regular transatlantic vagrant to Western Europe with small numbers annual in the UK and records from a significant number of European countries including France, Spain and Italy (Chandler 2009), it is to be expected that some individuals will migrate south to winter in Africa. This bird had presumably done so and was returning with other northbound migrant waders via the Douz wetlands.

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